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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

20 January 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Vice President
Secretary of State
Secretary of Defense
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

Following up the paper I sent yesterday on the implications of SA-5s in Syria, a further paper on probable Israeli and Syrian reactions is attached.

I also take the occasion to pass along judgments of Charles Waterman, our National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East, on some possible deeper Soviet purposes. These factors should be watched in assessing Israeli and Soviet strategy in responding to the President's Middle East initiative.

It is hard to attribute the Soviets sending several hundred men to Syria with the clear potential for Israeli preemptive action to any purpose other than that of forcing all parties to the peace process to reckon and ultimately deal with the Soviet Union.

Should the SA-5s be destroyed--with both Soviet and Israeli casualties--and the Soviets respond with deeper direct involvement, the Soviets would become a force which could no longer be neglected.

Andropov may conceive that the Soviet "ticket" for entry into the Middle East power game is to become sufficiently troublesome militarily and potentially useful diplomatically to be attractive to the Israelis as an additional interlocutor. Both Israelis and Soviets have an interest in defeating the Reagan initiative.

It is possible that Soviet planning is an attempt to change the Middle East equation, this way:

- 1) Establish themselves as a consistent military guarantor of Syria, with direct military involvement, and capable of inflicting significant casualties on Israeli forces used to neutralize them.
- 2) Having done so, establish a dialogue with Israel, based on Soviet influence in some Arab circles. Specifically, its capability of influencing policy in Syria, with the PLO, and in Iraq would be attractive to Israel. Use Syria and exploit Israeli-US friction over Palestine and Lebanon to intimidate Jordan and slow down the peace process.
- 3) Continue to take positions in line with the Arab consensus on issues such as Palestine, and appeal to moderate Arabs by resuming military supply to Iraq, and offering Gulf states protection against Iran.

In this way, re-emerge as a power capable of influencing: (a) Israeli actions by steady force; (b) Arab actions by direct military support and politically supporting stances.

Attachment
NESA M#83-10012, 20 Jan 83


William J. Casey

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